

steep slope with grottos that harbor a small population of Appalachian woodrat (*Neotoma magister*). The area occurs off to the north of Big Branch. Additionally, the grottos provide habitat for a lampshade spider (*Hypochilus pococki*).

Along the stream corridors and in sheltered coves through most of the site are several examples of fair to good quality Acidic Cove Forest. The canopy is a closed canopy with dominant species including tulip poplar, sweet birch (*Betula lenta*), red maple, northern red oak, white pine (*Pinus strobus*), and Canada hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*). Small definable patches of Rich Cove Forest are embedded along short sections of the stream corridor. These patches are distinguished by the presence of several Rich Cove species, such as basswood (*Tilia americana* var. *heterophylla*), Carolina silverbell (*Halesia tetraptera*), and Fraser's sedge (*Cymophyllus fraserianus*), which is located along the stream and adjacent slopes along a hiking trail leading up to Woodruff Ridge. Occurring near the Fraser's sedge is a small occurrence of the uncommon heath woodrush (*Luzula multiflora*). The understory consists of canopy species, alternate-leaf dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*), mountain holly (*Ilex montana*), witch-hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*), sourwood (*Oxydendrum arboreum*), and black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*). Shrubs vary in abundance and are often locally abundant along north-facing slopes where they occur in thick patches. The dominant shrubs include great laurel, Catawba rhododendron (*R. catawbiense*), mountain laurel, sweet pepperbush (*Clethra acuminata*), blueberries (*Vaccinium* spp.), pinxter-flower (*R. periclymenoides*), flame azalea (*R. calendulaceum*), and horse-sugar (*Symplocos tinctoria*). Common woody vines include Virginia creeper, greenbrier, poison ivy, grape, cross-vine (*Bignonia capreolata*), and hog peanut (*Amphicarpaea bracteata*). The herbaceous layer is fairly diverse. Dominant herbs include marginal wood-fern (*Dryopteris marginalis*), Canada horsebalm (*Collinsonia canadensis*), hay-scented fern (*Dennstaedtia punctilobula*), dwarf crested iris (*Iris cristata*), American water horehound (*Lycopus americanus*), Indian cucumber (*Medeola virginiana*), and white snakeroot (*Ageratina altissima*). Downy rattlesnake plantain (*Goodyera pubescens*) and the uncommon roundleaf ragwort (*Packera obovata*) are less abundant. They occur along the lower slopes where the community transitions to Acidic Cove Forest above the shrub-line of great laurel and mountain laurel found along the stream. Potential habitat for roundleaf ragwort exists along the slopes throughout the site and the region.

Along a few prominent south-facing slopes and ridgelines on dry and rocky soils are fair to very good examples of Pine--Oak/Heath. Several of these examples are considered to be 'old growth' forest remnants (Messick 2000). This community has either an open or closed canopy, with the dominant canopy species of Table Mountain pine (*Pinus pungens*), shortleaf pine (*P. echinata*), scrub pine (*P. virginiana*), chestnut oak, scarlet oak, hickories, black gum, and red maple. The southern pine bark beetle has killed some of the canopy pines. This is especially noticeable along Walker Hollow Ridge. The understory is comprised of black gum, red maple, and sourwood. Shrubs are thick and contains blueberries, maple-leaf viburnum (*Viburnum acerifolium*), horse-sugar, strawberry-bush, great laurel, and mountain laurel. Common woody vines include muscadine grape (*Vitis rotundifolia*), poison ivy, and Virginia creeper. The herb layer is sparse overall, with herbs occurring in open areas where the shrub layer is either thinned or absent. Common herbs include spotted wintergreen, galax, ragwort (*Packera* sp.), tickseed, and sunflower.